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## **Operation Warden: British sabotage planning in the Canary Islands during the Second World War**

Between 1939 and 1945, the Canary Islands became protagonists in the Second World War. Although Spain was never formally involved in the war, the connivance of the Franco regime allowed ports such as Las Palmas to act as supply points for Axis submarines. In response, the Allied Powers did not hesitate to intervene diplomatically or militarily. Therefore, the main objective of this article is to reveal the most fundamental components of *Operation Warden*, a British sabotage plan designed in 1941 which, although not ultimately implemented, stipulated the sinking of several German and Italian vessels in Puerto de la Luz (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria).

Keywords: Warden; SOE; Spain; Canary Islands; sabotage; World War Two

### **Introduction**

Although Spain declared itself neutral at the outbreak of war in September 1939, the Allies could not be confident of its continued neutrality during the conflict, especially

after the fall of France in June 1940, when Spain changed its formal position to one of non-belligerency, and after June 1941, when Spanish bellicosity was also composed of an anti-communist ideological justification that had its roots in the recent Spanish Civil War.<sup>1</sup> However, economic difficulties deriving from the Spanish Civil War, the postponement of a possible formal shift to a state of belligerence, and the change in the direction of the war all contributed to the ultimate non-participation of Spain in the conflict.

Despite the return of the Franco regime to strict official neutrality in October 1943, the assistance it offered to Germany was maintained until the end of the war. This included acceptance of the activities of Gestapo and German intelligence agents, the use of the Spanish merchant marine to assist Germany, the trade of strategic materials, the supply of German submarines from Spanish ports, and the facilitation of the Axis propaganda dissemination.<sup>2</sup>

Due to Spain's strategic situation and the risks associated with its possible belligerency or collaboration, Britain was actively involved in controlling foreign activity in the territory, pressuring and ensuring the country's neutrality, as well as designing and laying the ground for subversive and sabotage plans. The Foreign Office and the British Embassy were in charge of maintaining a balance between cordiality and pressure on the Spanish Government. However, organizations such as the Naval Intelligence Division (NID), the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) and the Special Operations Executive (SOE) focused on gathering information, investigating the enemy, promoting and organizing resistance groups, and laying the ground for the design and implementation of sabotage activities.<sup>3</sup>

Especially between 1940 and 1943, the Canary Islands became an essential strategic piece in the war. The archipelago was considered crucial as a potential British

naval base in the event of the loss of Gibraltar and as a point of supply for the German battle of the Atlantic. The archipelago was the object of several occupation plans whose main aim was the cession, use, or occupation of the islands – especially Gran Canaria.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, German submarines sailed the islands' waters and could be spotted in their ports while refuelling clandestinely from German ships such as the *Corrientes*.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the islands were also the focus of espionage activities, information gathering and sabotage planning carried out by France and Great Britain with the aim of hindering any collaboration offered to Nazi Germany by Spain in the vicinity of their ports.

It is in this sense that this article aims to analyse and contextualize the planning of *Operation Warden*, a British sabotage plan designed by the SOE between June and September 1941. Although *Warden* is briefly mentioned by authors such as Díaz Benítez, Messenger, Ros Agudo, Viñas Martín and Wylie, there has been, as yet, no complete analysis of the operation.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the purpose of this article is to reveal the essential components of the operation, to analyse its causes and implications, as well as the alternatives proposed in the field of diplomacy.

Although the operation stipulated the sinking of German and Italian vessels in Puerto de la Luz (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria), it was finally postponed due to the Foreign Office's preference for maintaining a diplomatic approach to Spanish affairs. Hence, this article also aims to start a debate on a gap within academic accounts of wartime operational intelligence; the study of operations that were planned but never implemented. *Warden* provides a case study that illustrates the importance of the international political context and the power of the Foreign Office's veto over special operations, especially in Spain. Furthermore, the article aims to integrate a local case study in the broader context of war, intelligence and diplomacy, therefore contributing to the study of the role played by the intelligence agencies and their relationship with

international politics. Finally, a focus on *Warden* illustrates the effects of the Second World War on the Canary Islands and how war planning and intelligence turned the archipelago into a protagonist in the conflict.

### **The Second World War in Spain: strategy, diplomacy and intelligence**

The affinity between the Axis powers and Francoist Spain during the Second World War was reinforced by a significant debt Spain owed Germany arising from the Spanish Civil War, secret diplomatic agreements, Spain's colonial aspirations, and elements of clear fascist inspiration in the construction of a new state.<sup>7</sup> The German victories of May 1940 and the Italian declaration of war at the beginning of the following month encouraged Franco to change Spain's position from neutrality to non-belligerency, which in practice was understood as pre-belligerency or public support to one of the sides in conflict.<sup>8</sup>

This imprecise formula implied the Spanish attempt to participate in the war, as was reflected in its negotiations with Germany. Although the Spanish offer was initially rejected, it may have contributed to the German expectations of using one of the Canary Islands to build a large naval base in the Atlantic. The revaluation of the islands did not last beyond the German-Spanish negotiations of June and November 1940, in which the Third Reich was interested in formal Spanish entry into the war.<sup>9</sup> Due to the fact that Spain was not willing to offer Gran Canaria, the Germans postponed their occupation plans and encouraged a study of a defensive reinforcement of the islands before the attack on Gibraltar stipulated in *Operation Felix*.<sup>10</sup> With the Axis defeats and change of direction in the war in 1942, Spain shifted to the third phase of its wartime foreign policy, the return to formal neutrality.<sup>11</sup>

For most of the conflict, Spain's assistance to Nazi Germany included trafficking in strategic war goods, collaboration with the Spanish merchant navy, government connivance towards the activities undertaken by the Gestapo and the German intelligence services, and dissemination of pro-German propaganda.<sup>12</sup> However, one of the main collaborative actions was the refuelling of German submarines by Nazi cargo ships located in the ports of Vigo, Cádiz and Gran Canaria.<sup>13</sup> Franco accepted these operations as long as they were carried out from German ships, and the official involvement and connivance of the Spanish authorities was maintained at least until the end of 1941.<sup>14</sup> This situation led to multiple complaints from the Allies as it was considered one of "the clearest examples of Spain's breach of its neutral status", and a violation of the XIII Hague Convention of 1907.<sup>15</sup>

The first refuelling of German submarines in Spanish territory took place at the end of January and beginning of February 1940 through the German ship *Thalia*, in the city of Cadiz.<sup>16</sup> *Moro* – later replaced by *Gata* – was the code name chosen by the German authorities to designate the five operations carried out from the beginning of 1940, and especially, between July and October 1941.<sup>17</sup> As for the activities carried out in Vigo, the Germans gave priority to the ship *Bessel*, which was given the code name *Bernardo*, and was used in eight refuelling operations during June and July 1940, and November and December 1941. The involvement of the *Max Albrecht* vessel in Ferrol was code-named *Arroz*, while in Las Palmas, the cargo ship chosen for German operations in the Atlantic was the *Corrientes*, responsible for refuelling six submarines between March and July 1941 under the encrypted name of *Lima* – later *Culebra*.<sup>18</sup>

Due to the strategic location of Spain, particularly in relation to the British and French Empires, Britain could not stand aside. Spanish participation in the war would have led to a loss of Gibraltar.<sup>19</sup> In addition, Spain was a significant producer of war

materials such as wolfram. Thus, as Basil Liddell Hart had noted; “a friendly Spain is desirable, and a neutral Spain vital for Britain in a future war.”<sup>20</sup> Consequently, it was of vital importance for Great Britain to maintain Spanish neutrality and therefore the efforts of the Foreign Office were aimed at avoiding the enmity of the Franco regime and maintaining a certain degree of cordiality. However, in order to avoid Spanish participation in the war Britain also resorted to diverse instruments such as economic and diplomatic pressure, bribery – for example, financing some Spanish generals with the objective that they opposed the interventionist intentions of the Spanish Foreign Minister and Falange - the dissemination of propaganda material, and subversion or sabotage plans.<sup>21</sup>

### *British Intelligence in Spain*

Due to the strategic position of Spain, representatives of the SIS, figures associated with the Naval Intelligence Division, and SOE agents devoted special attention to the design and implementation of intelligence and counter-intelligence activities there. SIS activities in Spain – under the responsibility of Leonard Hamilton Stokes – focused on the fight against German intelligence operations, with counter-intelligence activities.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, SIS in both Spain and Portugal “played a central role in the hugely effective double-agent operations that played such a major part in the successful deception of the enemy,” over the Operation Torch landings and the invasion of Sicily, for example.<sup>23</sup>

The planning of clandestine operations was the main task of the SOE, the secret espionage and sabotage organisation created in July 1940 with the objective of carrying out sabotage behind enemy lines and supporting resistance movements abroad.<sup>24</sup> SOE’s activities in neutral and occupied countries focused on three principal tasks: first, striking at strategic targets such as industrial sites, economic facilities and ports; secondly,

training forces capable of operating as independent guerrilla bands at Britain's behest; and thirdly, broadening the range of Britain's political contacts through the establishment of contacts with opposition circles.<sup>25</sup>

The main objective of SOE's sabotage activities was the obstruction of any route, resource or activity that would be of benefit to Germany in terms of shipping, refuelling, transport, industry, energy, etc.<sup>26</sup> Thus, SOE designed sabotage operations intended to control, interfere with or destroy railway and port sites, mines or factories, among others. The case of Norway is especially significant, since SOE designed and executed numerous operations against enemy shipping, railways, mines, airfields and, especially, attacks against power stations and heavy water plants.<sup>27</sup> Elsewhere, in Sweden, for example, the British resorted to intelligence gathering and deception, but also to sabotage operations against trains or destroyers that were used to transport or escort German goods and troops.<sup>28</sup> In Switzerland, the SOE was responsible for operations to block railway lines and stations.<sup>29</sup>

The main task of SOE in Spain was to encourage the country to maintain its neutrality, "limiting German influence on the Iberian Peninsula and combating German efforts to exploit resources, material and otherwise."<sup>30</sup> The division that was in charge of SOE activities in Spain, Portugal and Spanish Morocco was Section H, created in 1941 "in part to assist the movement of SOE agents and French Resistance figures across the Pyrenees into occupied France."<sup>31</sup> Authors such as Ros Agudo also mention a subsection, created in April 1941, to be implemented in North Africa, Spain and France, intending to attack those merchants that were collaborating with the enemy, through sabotage activities in the ports where they were located.<sup>32</sup> Operations were always planned or carried out with the utmost discretion, causing "apparently accidental explosions at sea",

bribing crew members, organising kidnappings or fires, and faking or causing breakdowns or delays.<sup>33</sup>

However, SOE's activities in Spain were always limited by the guidelines of the Foreign Office and the Embassy in Madrid, which opposed military intervention in the country and gave priority to diplomatic and bribery instruments. In Spain, the general tendency of the British Ambassador, Sir Samuel Hoare, was to limit any operation that could complicate the embassy's formal relations with the host government.<sup>34</sup> The ambassador delegated the control of clandestine activities to the figure of Alan Hillgarth, his Naval Attaché and the coordinator of the activities undertaken by Naval Intelligence and the SOE.<sup>35</sup>

Therefore, in designing actions SOE kept its efforts on a small scale and more linked to operational needs; establishing contact with resistance groups in case of an enemy invasion, on the one hand, and planning acts of sabotage against German targets in Spain, on the other.<sup>36</sup> Thus, Britain designed operations aimed at curbing the use of Spanish territory as a supply or provisioning point for the German naval campaign, considering sabotage acts against ships and port facilities, such as the ones planned in *Warden* or *Postmaster*.<sup>37</sup> While *Warden* was the first sabotage action considered and designed in detail, the latter was the first fully documented violent act implemented by the SOE in territory under Spanish control. Carried out in January 1942, the operation involved the capture of German and Italian ships that had managed to take refuge in the port of Santa Isabel (Fernando Po).<sup>38</sup> Especially after 1943, SOE also considered sabotage activities against illegal trainloads of German shipments of wolfram on the Spanish and French side of the border, and also engaged in subtler forms of sabotage (persuasion of exporters, putting pressure on neutral traders, bribing shipmasters and promoting strikes among dockworkers).<sup>39</sup> However, although Hillgarth was a figure "willing to take the



greatest responsibility and risks,” most of the SOE operations were limited in practice by the veto imposed by the British Foreign Office on covert activities in the country.<sup>40</sup>

### **The strategic value of the Canary Islands during World War Two: refuelling and intelligence**

The Canary Islands, located in the Atlantic Ocean, southwest of Spain, northwest of Africa and in front of the coast of Morocco, have historically been considered a strategic area and an almost obligatory crossing point for navigation between the continents. During the war, the Canary Islands attracted the attention of foreign powers, who saw them as an alternative base in case Great Britain lost Gibraltar, or as a supply point for the submarine war waged by Germany in the Atlantic.

As has been described, Britain resorted to a variety of methods to try to keep Spain out of the conflict. However, and in case these options did not achieve the desired objective, the British also planned for the occupation of islands such as Gran Canaria in various plans that unfolded between 1940 and 1943 (*Puma*, *Pilgrim*, *Adroit*, among others).<sup>41</sup> In the spring of 1940, before Spain’s declaration of non-belligerency, Britain began to consider the occupation of Puerto de la Luz, an idea discarded during the summer of that year in favour of the Azores and Cape Verde. However, after March 1941 the Canarian option was revisited and from 1942 until the autumn of 1943 the conquest of Puerto de la Luz coexisted with another project to settle in the Canary Islands ports peacefully, with the support of the Spanish government, local authorities and population.<sup>42</sup>

Moreover, the consulates and secret agents of both Britain and Germany deployed all their efforts in collecting information and distributing war propaganda. However, the most direct consequence of the conflict took place in the insular ports, with the logistical support provided by the Spanish authorities to the German fleet (refuelling, transport of

material and Axis personnel, etc.).<sup>43</sup> One of the more active areas of the *Etappendienst* - the secret supply service for the German navy or Kriegsmarine - was known as *Etappe Kanaren* and it included Puerto de la Luz as an important submarine supply point for the Battle of the Atlantic.<sup>44</sup>

Due to its lack of overseas bases, Nazi Germany had to manage its clandestine supply in neutral territories such as the Canary Islands. As indicated by Díaz Benítez, the archipelago offered good prospects for attacking the South Atlantic route, “where the convoys of troops heading to the Middle East were located and from where London received the strategic raw materials from its extensive colonial empire.”<sup>45</sup> Thus, Germany had a total of seven supply vessels in the Canary Islands, five for auxiliary cruisers and two for submarines.<sup>46</sup> The first attempts to refuel German submarines in the Canary Islands, such as the U-37 in December 1940, were made without the strict consent of the Spanish authorities.<sup>47</sup> This campaign must be framed in the context of the second phase of the Battle of the Atlantic (July 1940-March 1941), which, especially after the defeat of France, was characterized by an increase in the loss and destruction of allied merchant shipping.<sup>48</sup> However, the initial endeavours of the German submarines in the islands failed because of the presence of British vessels.<sup>49</sup> Hence, the effective beginning of the supply operations took place from March 1941 and, according to Díaz Benítez, although the activities did not always have the connivance of the Spanish authorities, “those that were carried out successfully had their consent and even counted on their active collaboration”.<sup>50</sup> On these grounds, Ros Agudo insists that the operations would have been impossible without the express support of the Spanish Minister of the Navy, who regularly reported on the refuelling activities on the day before they materialised.<sup>51</sup>

The *Corrientes*, a steamship belonging to the German company *Hamburg-Süd* which had arrived in Las Palmas on 26 August 1939, was the main German vessel used

to provide fuel to submarines approaching Puerto de la Luz. It was.<sup>52</sup> It was a supply ship that had been modified and equipped with an additional 300-tonne tank.<sup>53</sup> It had a reliable crew and an elevated deck that “avoided sighting from land”, whereas other ships, like the *Charlotte Schliemann*, did not have enough of an infrastructure or could possibly attract much more attention from the enemy.<sup>54</sup>

Due to the background of the Spanish government and, above all, its ambiguous position in the war, the Allies could not disregard surveillance of the island’s waters for the sake of “preventing any type of smuggling in favour of the Third Reich.”<sup>55</sup> Before its withdrawal from the war, France devoted special attention to controlling this situation, and as Díaz Benítez points out, some of its submarines were visible in the surroundings of the archipelago between March and May 1940.

In fact, it is in this context that the Canarian researcher Díaz Benítez frames the the explosion of the *Corrientes* on 9 May of that year. The attack was linked to a French operation led by Claude Peri, who used a launch from the merchant ship *Le Rhin* to attach magnetic mines and plastic explosives to the ship’s hull.<sup>56</sup> The incursion was carried out with a new type of weapon, the so-called limpet mine, which had just been invented by the Stuart Macrae and Cecil Vandepier Clarke in 1939.<sup>57</sup> The explosion caused only limited damage that was quickly repaired, and therefore, “did not severely affect the logistic support to the German naval war in the Atlantic”, which began at the end of that year with the failed attempt to supply the U-37.<sup>58</sup> However, this episode can be considered a “historic milestone in the development of warfare technology”, being one of the first occasions on which limpet or magnetic mines were used.<sup>59</sup>

From March 1941 onwards, and especially during that summer, German activities in the archipelago intensified. The *Corrientes* successfully completed six fuelling operations: to submarine U-124 on the night of 3 March, to submersibles U-105 and

U-106 on the nights of 4 and 5 March, U-123 on 24 June, and finally, U-69 and U-103 on the nights of 30 June and 5 July 1941, respectively.<sup>60</sup> These operations should be contextualized as occurring in the third phase of the Battle of the Atlantic (April-December 1941), in which, after the losses suffered by the German Navy in March, the *Kriegsmarine* decided to fight in secondary scenarios that were less closely monitored, such as the waters of western and equatorial Africa.<sup>61</sup>

On many occasions, demonstrating the fact of and accurately identifying the location of the re-supply of enemy submarines was a complicated task, although this matter was made easier by the decoding of German messages ordering submarines to refuel at *Culebra*. The first references to *Culebra* among British inquiries appeared on 7 June 1941, when the Germans warned of the danger of continuing to refuel in the surroundings of Cape Verde. The constancy of the messages allowed the British to link the location coordinates of submarines such as the U-123 or U-69 with a geographic location close to the Canary Islands. Moreover, one of the crew members of the U-69 suffered from appendicitis, so on 27 June, the boat was instructed to go to *Culebra* on the night of 29 June, at which time the person affected could be treated “on board the resupply ship.”<sup>62</sup>

From that point, the British were able to identify the *Culebra* as a refuelling ship that must have been located in one of the ports of the Canary Islands. Although the Spanish authorities might have been aware of the events, the British considered that they would not go so far as to commit this irregularity and allow a Spanish ship to supply the submarines of the Axis, and therefore, the search focused on a German ship.<sup>63</sup> The location of the U-123 during the night of 24 June narrowed the search down to the islands of Tenerife and Gran Canaria. However, the *Germania* arrived at Tenerife loaded with a large shipment of aviation gasoline, and the British considered that it was unlikely to

serve as a supply ship. Therefore, everything pointed to Puerto de la Luz (Gran Canaria), in which the German ships *Charlotte Schliemann*, *Kersten Miles*, and *Corrientes* were anchored. The information collected allowed the British to conclude that the ship hiding under the code *Culebra* was, in fact, the *Corrientes*.<sup>64</sup>

The British intelligence services devoted much of their time to gathering information about the islands, with the objective of using it for the benefit of any military offensive in the archipelago. These intelligence activities were closely connected to the maritime trade companies and the consular activities, which contributed to the supervision of German interaction with the islands and their ports.<sup>65</sup> The consular messages indicated, for example, the excellent position of the ship *Corrientes* and how it was supplying submarines at night on the starboard side which was not visible from the shore.<sup>66</sup> The steamship often did not show the standard lights, presumably in order not to light up the water and, in addition, it was located in the most external position of the port, about 200 metres from the point of the breakwater.<sup>67</sup>

Britain resorted not only to their usual agents or sources of information but also to figures specially recruited for this purpose, like Basil Miller. He was the second son of Gerald Miller, Managing Director of Miller and Co, the growing British shipping company in Gran Canaria. Although Basil was in Las Palmas when the war broke out, he left the island in May 1941 and joined the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, under the direction of Admiral John Godfrey.<sup>68</sup> In general, the Miller family offered significant information about the islands, providing useful material in the event of an occupation of Gran Canaria and warning about the activities of the Germans in the archipelago.<sup>69</sup> For example, throughout July 1941, and in line with the information gathered about *Culebra*, Basil Miller drew up and delivered to his superiors an extensive report describing the importance of the German re-supply operations.<sup>70</sup>

The breakwater León y Castillo or “new long mole”, as Miller called it in 1941, was a 2,825-metre long port structure whose construction had been completed in 1935 to provide shelter to the outside of the port.<sup>71</sup> The base of the mole was carefully guarded by military authorities which, especially from the spring of 1940, made night-time access to the outer section difficult. The end of the breakwater was therefore in the middle of the sea and far from land, which favoured any activity carried out from the Axis ships.<sup>72</sup> According to the description presented, “on dark nights nothing at all can be seen of the end of the breakwater [...] The distance is too great for any activity of a reasonably quiet nature to be heard.”<sup>73</sup>

Two large German ships – presumably the *Charlotte Schliemann* and the *Kersten Miles* – were anchored at the end of the breakwater, and the *Corrientes* was lying at anchor and covering the two tankers from the shore.<sup>74</sup> They were a mile’s distance from land, which aroused the suspicions of informants on the island since “no ship, with the harbour so empty, would tie up so far away.”<sup>75</sup> Although the *Charlotte Schliemann* also raised the suspicions of the informants due to the loss of height of the ship, the *Corrientes* was the ship located furthest away from any land-based port structure, a fact that would make any clandestine activity even easier.<sup>76</sup> Thus, coinciding with all these initial suspicions, the British launched a first diplomatic complaint in July 1941. However, in the meantime, pending the result of diplomatic representations, the Admiralty also considered “whether other and more drastic methods are operationally practicable.”<sup>77</sup> Consequently, although in practice the first protests were enough to interrupt the German activities, the situation also encouraged the parallel planning of a sabotage operation.

### **Planning of Operation Warden (1941): a sabotage attack in Gran Canaria**

After the first suspicions about the German activities in Puerto de La Luz, those responsible for the SOE – especially subdivision SO2 - in collaboration with the British Naval Intelligence Division, planned a sabotage operation aimed at sinking the main German ships anchored in the port of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. Planning for *Operation Warden* – the name given to the operation as a whole – was undertaken from the beginning of July 1941 with the aim of the operation being executed the following month.<sup>78</sup>

Some authors describe the action conceived in *Warden* as an active and direct sabotage operation, which also required exceptionally detailed planning.<sup>79</sup> According to Ros Agudo, this project can be described as one of the first operations planned by the SOE in Spain and its primary objective was the disablement of 40,000 tonnes worth of enemy merchant ships in Puerto de la Luz.<sup>80</sup> The operation was principally designed by the Shipping section of the SOE – using the code name D/Z –, but it also involved leading figures such as Gladwyn Jebb, Chief Executive Officer of SOE, and Charles Hambro, Deputy director of SOE until 1942. Moreover, the operation reveals the contribution made by different sections of SOE: the *Operations and Training Section*, directed by Colin McVean Gubbins, the *Scientific and Research Section*, led by D.M. Newitt with the code name D/SR, and the *Operations Section* controlled by R.H. Barry, codenamed M.O.

The operation was designed to be executed by a team of Polish agents specially trained and prepared for action. Hence, it was also planned by representatives of the SOE'S Polish Section (MP) under the direction of Harold Perkins and the supervision of Gubbins – and the MPO, controlled by Ronald Hazell on the question of subversion.<sup>81</sup> However, the planning also required cooperation between the Admiralty Naval Staff – especially the Naval Intelligence Division – and SOE, so the operation was also discussed by figures such as John Godfrey and M.R. Campbell – Director and Subdirector of the

NID – John Terry and Ralph Edwards – Directors of Operations Division within NID encrypted as DOD (F) and DOD (H) – and Admiral Holbrook – Liaison Officer and Head of the Naval Section of SOE, with the code name NID17.

The initial *Warden* proposal, dated 15 July 1941, envisaged the sinking of seven of the eight ships that were located at Puerto de la Luz – three German, three Italian and one Danish – by placing two magnetic bombs on each of the ships and hijacking the eighth ship, the Danish *Slesvig*, for the escape of the saboteurs.<sup>82</sup> Although the initial operation included the sinking of seven ships, from 7 July onwards, the Admiralty shifted to focus on just the German vessels, which were also near the external entrance to the port.<sup>83</sup> Thus, the plans drawn up on 5 August 1941 called for the sinking of the three German ships, although extending the operation to the immobilisation of the other ships if local and climatic conditions so permitted.<sup>84</sup>

Basil Miller provided information about the port facilities, the vessels available, the main points of reference or support, as well as the most relevant contacts in Las Palmas in case the operation took place.<sup>85</sup> He also offered the collaboration of *Miller and Co*, which could provide contacts and tugboats, and some Norwegian colleagues, who could provide the operators with local sailing boats. The *Metropole Hotel* and the *British Club* were described as important strategic points that could also be employed in the operation. Both buildings had superb gardens that were barely lit and that led to what was then an almost deserted beach – currently Playa de Las Alcaravaneras.<sup>86</sup> The *Corrientes* was approximately half a mile from the shore, and according to Miller, it could be easily accessed by swimming to it.<sup>87</sup>

However, the operation's planning was taken care of from a very different perspective. During July, consideration was given to sending an officer and seven Polish SOE agents, trained for the mission, who would implement the attack from their arrival



ship.<sup>88</sup> Over time, the plans included two more agents, bringing the total to nine experts who would be sent as merchant sailors on the British-owned *TS Empire Simba* to the port of Pepel (Freetown).<sup>89</sup>

The *Empire Simba*, built in 1918, had been assigned exclusively by the Ministry of War Transport to SO2 for this campaign, and it was scheduled to sail in the early days of September.<sup>90</sup> During the crossing, the ship would have to simulate an engine breakdown that would force a technical stop at Puerto de la Luz, where the alleged repair and the detonation of the explosives would take place.<sup>91</sup> While the ship was being repaired, the saboteurs would have enough time to investigate and test the conditions of the operation, with the help of Miller's trusted men.<sup>92</sup> According to the initial plans, under the cover of night the agents would place two magnetic bombs on the rear rudder of each of the seven ships, as well as two additional explosives on the *Simba*.<sup>93</sup> The explosive material would provide for a three-hour interval until its final detonation. During that time, the attackers had to take the opportunity to board the *Slesvig*, sailing immediately to England with the active cooperation of its captain and crew, who were pro-British.<sup>94</sup>

Lieutenant Jan Buckowski, was selected to lead a group of Polish agents being trained in STS 24, SOE's Special Paramilitary Training School located in the remote and inaccessible town of Inverie in the Scottish Highlands.<sup>95</sup> The Polish Section of SOE offered a strong historical tradition of conspiracy and insurrection against oppressors, therefore the Poles were probably selected for their effectiveness and specialization, as they were seen as bloody and violent agents who would perform any subversive and sabotage activity with high determination. Buckowski's crew was composed of leading and ordinary seamen who had been specially instructed and prepared for naval operations such as the one required by *Warden*. A few days before 19 July 1941, Roland Hazell and Major Godfrey visited the station to discuss the scheme with the team. Apparently

Buckowski “was extremely pleased that something was now actually going to be done,” and having talked over the operation discreetly with his men, “they decided that they would go in for some whole-heartedly, provided they were allowed to do it in their own way” and that they were then given maximum assistance.<sup>96</sup>

Following the suggestions provided by the agents at the station, the decision was taken to carry out the attack with Mark-VII depth charges, large cylindrical drums of up to 300 pounds filled with explosive material and equipped with a detonator that included a timer to delay the explosion for up to 36 hours.<sup>97</sup> The plan also included the possibility of following Miller’s suggestion and organising an evening social event such as a ball especially for the sailors in the area through British and Spanish institutions. This tactic would attract the attention of the sailors, who would leave their ships to attend the event and thus facilitate the sabotage activities.<sup>98</sup> The riskiest part of the operation was understood to be the final escape. If the operation detonated the explosives on the *Simba*, the crew had to be forced to leave the ship as soon as possible so that they could be repatriated, although some reports did not rule out the possibility of allowing some of the personnel to die.<sup>99</sup> A second option was to organise the escape through the *Simba*, which would sail to Peipel or Bathurst, the nearest British port.<sup>100</sup> Finally, in a meeting held on 24 July, it was decided to leave the decision of how to make the escape to Buckowski.<sup>101</sup>

The naval crew undertook intensive training at STS 24 between July and early September 1941. The instructors of STS 21 (Arisaig House) and Lieutenant Mathews were responsible for organising training and instruction in naval sabotage, detonation techniques and intelligence.<sup>102</sup> Agents from the Scientific Research Section of the SOE (DS/R), including the Research and Development of Equipment (D/X), were responsible for live demonstrations of the mechanisms and organizing all the military material necessary for the operation, which was to be fully prepared for the first weeks of

August.<sup>103</sup> In addition to the selected explosives, the team would board with a set of limpet bombs, weapons, a wireless communication set, silencers and a set of naval identification papers and forged identity documents in various nationalities – Canadian, Polish, Austrian, Russian, Czechoslovak and Danish.<sup>104</sup> Buckowski was also to be provided with funds set aside by the SOE for possible bribery activities in the city of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria.<sup>105</sup>

### **The victory of diplomacy over sabotage (1941-1943): *Warden* postponed**

Although the plan was almost ready and awaiting approval from mid-August, *Warden* was progressively postponed until its final dissolution, due to the risk of interference with other strategic operations but especially because of the limitations imposed by the Foreign Office and the British Embassy in Madrid. As of March 1941, and especially after July, the signs of possible Spanish participation in the war increased. In response, under the name of *Operation Pilgrim*, the War Office considered a new and larger operation to capture Gran Canaria, especially its port and aerodrome.<sup>106</sup> Hence, *Warden* was initially held in abeyance until either the Admiralty or the British War Cabinet reached a final decision concerning *Operation Pilgrim*.<sup>107</sup> Moreover, the activities of SOE in Spain were also limited by the institutional obstacles imposed by the Foreign Office and the Embassy, their right of veto, a certain amateurism and the predominance of other intelligence organizations like the SIS.<sup>108</sup>

According to Viñas, the FO preference for the diplomatic and bribery campaign hindered the development and implementation of other activities connected to sabotage or subversion.<sup>109</sup> Thus, as Messenger describes it, SOE was an organization “against the grain,” a planning rather than an active organization so far as sabotage in Spain was

concerned.<sup>110</sup> With the aim of limiting German activities in the island, the British initially resorted to protest notes as a form of diplomatic pressure that would maintain cordial relations with the Spanish government. In other areas of the country, such as Vigo, the British had already resorted to similar tactics. In fact, although the Germans had not yet used the port of Vigo to supply submarines, the first suspicions forced the naval attachés of Great Britain and France to issue formal complaints that compromised Spain in February 1940.<sup>111</sup> From the British point of view, the pressure exerted had led to the vessels being transferred to the interior of the port of Vigo, which meant that “they could not effectively either go out themselves, or send boats out to meet the submarines.”<sup>112</sup> Thus, the apparent success of the campaign in the north of Spain served as an exemplary model that could also be implemented in the islands.<sup>113</sup> Therefore, during the summer of 1941 and in response to initial suspicions about the use of Puerto de la Luz as a submarine supply point, Britain formalized the first diplomatic complaints that eventually caused the minister of the Spanish Navy to interrupt or discontinue supply activities.<sup>114</sup>

Despite this interruption the representatives of *Warden* maintained their desire to implement the sabotage operation. In September 1941, for example, Jebb made one last attempt to pressure the FO, but in his meeting with FO representative Roger Makins the latter supported Hoare's preference for maintaining diplomatic instruments and rejected sabotage as a viable solution.<sup>115</sup> Although Makins instructed Charles Hambro to refrain from violent activities, he did consider that the plan could begin to be implemented, paving the way in the event of a change in the state's opinion.<sup>116</sup> The British considered that, “if the FO had by that time applied pressure without result on the Spanish government, they would be more favorably inclined to consider direct action than they were at present.” For this reason, it was proposed to send the necessary material and

personnel to Freetown by boat. Once there, the SO2 ship had to remain on constant alert and be ready to leave for the islands should the need arise.<sup>117</sup>

Considering that the operation could ultimately be cancelled, those in charge decided to modify part of the initial plan. As stated by Admiral Holdbrook, “in view of the fact that doubt exists as to whether the operation will ever take place, it was decided not to send the ten Poles as they are extremely blood thirsty in character and cannot be depended on to tolerate delays such as may be encountered in this operation.”<sup>118</sup> At the end of 1941, the Diversionary Group led by Buckowski was finally transferred to Gibraltar, before serving with the Coast Watching Flotilla (CWF), a Special Operations Group created to evacuate Polish citizens by sea from North Africa and Southern France.<sup>119</sup>

As an alternative, SOE and NID suggested employing a different group of agents who had been trained under the framework of *Operation Postmaster*.<sup>120</sup> Thus, “all these eleven men should arrive in Freetown at approximately the same time as the *Empire Simba*, and they could then take the place of the Poles in the event of the operation being put into effect”.<sup>121</sup> According to the Admiralty notes, the SOE had despatched the necessary stores –limpets and depth charges – to Freetown on 3 September.<sup>122</sup> Although there is no evidence that this preventive stage of the operation was finally put into practice, it is known that from 9 September, the *Empire Simba* began the first of seven round trips to Freetown, which included a prior stop at Oban in Scotland.<sup>123</sup>

In contrast to the opinion of the Admiralty and SOE, which considered the case of the *Corrientes* to be an action that “[it] would be worthwhile even breaking off relations with Spain if she could be successfully made away with”, the FO maintained its intention to continue with the same diplomatic pressure that had been applied in Vigo.<sup>124</sup> British foreign policy gave priority to negotiation with the Spanish authorities, as their

main objective was the interruption of enemy activities in Las Palmas through the mobilization or transfer of the supplier ships. Hence, on 4 September, Britain requested the urgent transfer of the German ships anchored in Las Palmas to the inner port, from where it would be challenging for them to continue with any refuelling activity.<sup>125</sup> Although Germany made every effort to prevent the transfer, the ships were finally moved to the inner side of the harbour on 17 September.<sup>126</sup> However, the Germans were aware of the British sabotage plans, so they encouraged the Spanish government to protect the vessels and return them to their original location. After the pressure exerted in October and despite the possible risks associated, Germany managed to get the ships returned to the outside of the port in November, where they were placed under military surveillance.<sup>127</sup>

The concern of the allies continued, especially between August 1942 and May 1943, when the Battle of the Atlantic reached its peak.<sup>128</sup> Thus, as Ros Agudo reveals, in February 1943 and with the war balance much more favourable to the Allies, Alan Hillgarth considered that “the time had come for more drastic actions against German merchants than the often useless diplomatic protests.”<sup>129</sup> Hillgarth considered that it was time to get tough and to move from defensive to offensive actions.<sup>130</sup> As he claimed, the war had reached a stage where a “considered campaign against Axis maritime activities in Spanish ports [...] can be staged without much risk to Anglo-Spanish relations”.<sup>131</sup>

For this reason, in a report sent to the NID on 18 February 1943, he included once again Puerto de la Luz, among others, in the objective of sabotage acts. The proposal considered the torpedoing or sinking of the *Corrientes* with a limpet mine which could easily be placed by a diver. The uproar that this attack would cause in the city of Las Palmas was already included among the foreseen consequences, but Hillgarth did not consider it possible for Spain to hold Great Britain responsible.<sup>132</sup> As stated by the naval

attaché, “the recommendations involve some risk and might conceivably lead to a minor incident and possibly some coolness, but they cannot involve us in war.”<sup>133</sup> According to Ros Agudo, in order to avoid being held responsible the Admiralty could claim not to have official knowledge about the sabotage activities. Moreover, the operations would be carried out by intermediaries and both Hoare and the FO “would not be informed about anything.”<sup>134</sup>

Although the Spanish authorities had recently reported the relocation of the *Corrientes* into the inner port, Hillgarth considered that “this movement has no relation to the protests of this Embassy, but is solely due to the leak which she developed [...] and she will shortly be returned to her original berth near the entrance to the harbor.”<sup>135</sup> However, the Naval High Command in London finally dismissed the sabotage proposals, as it was considered more important to keep Hoare’s trust unbroken and place all hopes in the diplomatic route.<sup>136</sup> In September 1943, the German ships *Corrientes* and *Kersten Miles* were finally rendered unusable, moved inside the port and watched over by the Spanish authorities to avoid possible sabotage. Nonetheless, this situation should also be framed and explained in a new war context in which Spain was already slowly returning to neutrality.

## **Conclusions**

During the Second World War, the combatant nations not only resorted to armed confrontation as an instrument of struggle, but also to a secret war involving intelligence, diplomacy, subversion and sabotage. The British road to victory utilised both instruments of attack and prevention, and therefore, the war also involved the neutral territories in order to prevent them from being invaded or made use of by the enemy. Thus, Britain

included among its main aims the maintenance of the strict neutrality of nations such as Sweden, Switzerland and Spain.

British foreign policy in Spain involved diplomatic pressure, bribery and economic coercion as the primary weapons in the effort to maintain Spanish neutrality. However, Britain also planned operations of occupation, subversion and sabotage in the event of contingencies such as Spain's belligerence and collaboration with the Axis, an enemy invasion, or a British occupation. Some acts of sabotage were designed in the field of maritime activities, with planning for the destruction or sinking of enemy ships. The latter case was the main objective of *Operation Warden*, the sabotage plan in Puerto de la Luz, Gran Canaria, designed by SOE in collaboration with the Naval Intelligence Division.

During the war, the Canary Islands played an important role as a strategic supply point for German submarine warfare in the Atlantic. Thus, the islands were part of the war's active front and witnessed the most obvious breach of Spanish neutrality by allowing the refuelling of submarines from German ships, such as the *Corrientes*, anchored in their ports. *Operation Warden* was designed and planned between July and August 1941, with the objective of sinking at least three German ships involved in these resupply operations. However, British foreign policy, with a preference for the diplomatic route, postponed and therefore made it impossible to implement the attack not only in the context of the operation described in 1941 but in similar later proposals. Nonetheless, the operation evidences the different roles played by Great Britain's war departments, their planning process and the importance given to the Canary Islands. Thus, *Warden* demonstrates the limitations imposed by the Foreign Office's veto over the execution of sabotage operations and the persistence and insistence of the SOE in its active struggle



against what was perceived by its leaders and the Admiralty to be a serious breach of neutrality.

Moreover, *Warden* evidences a complex planning process that involved the completion of different phases of execution: counter-intelligence, detection of targets, gathering of information and planning. As described in *Warden*, the design of sabotage operations implied the involvement of different organizations such as the Naval Intelligence Division, the Ministry of Economic Warfare, the Foreign Office or the Embassy, as well as the participation of several different sections within SOE. Furthermore, the magnitude of *Operation Warden*, the degree of involvement of the bodies concerned and its potential consequences also evidence the effects of the international war on the Canary Islands. The operation required a high degree of planning, adaptation and organisation, as well as the collection of local information through figures like Basil Miller and a premeditated training of those who were considered the bloodiest agents.

The final implementation of operations for occupation or sabotage in the islands only required official approval and the mobilisation of the resources that, in places like Freetown, were awaiting the warning signal. The *Postmaster* plan to hijack the ships anchored in Fernando Po received the final authorisation of the Foreign Office on 6 January 1942, and the Axis ships were finally captured eight days later.<sup>137</sup> The expeditionary force became known as the *Maid Honour Force*, and its success led to the creation of the command known as the *Small Scale Raiding Force* (SSRF) as of 1942.<sup>138</sup> The force reserved for *Operation Pilgrim* was also sent to Freetown under the name of *Operation Irrigate*, where it remained, awaiting the final decision, at least until February 1942.<sup>139</sup> Despite the invasion operation being reconsidered under new names

and complemented with other possible subsequent occupation plans, the Allies never concluded any of the proposals.

The interruption of German activities on the island and the mobilization of the ships was the result of diplomatic pressure and the progressive shift towards neutrality in Spanish foreign policy from 1943 onwards. Although *Warden* was not finally implemented, it could have involved the detonation of large explosives in one of the ports of the islands, in an action described by those in charge as “one of the largest and most spectacular acts of sabotage ever committed.”<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On the position of Spain in the war, see: Morales, *Historia de la no beligerancia española*; Payne and Contreras, *España y la Segunda Guerra Mundial*; Suárez, *España, Franco y la Segunda Guerra Mundial*; and Tusell, *Franco, España y la II Guerra Mundial*.

<sup>2</sup> Messenger, “Against the Grain: Special Operations”, 174. Relations between Spain and Germany during the war have been studied by authors such as: Moreno, *Hitler y Franco*; Payne, *Franco y Hitler: España, Alemania, la Segunda Guerra Mundial*; Ruhl, *Franco, Falange y Tercer Reich*; and Suárez Fernández, *Franco y El III Reich*. On the Spanish naval assistance to Germany, see: Burdick, “Moro: The Resupply of German Submarines”; Díaz Benítez, “The Etappe Kanaren”, 482; Salgado Rodríguez, *Marea Roja, Marea Negra*; and Ros Agudo, *La Guerra Secreta de Franco*, 99–104; Wingeate Pike, *Franco and the Axis Stigma*, 149.

<sup>3</sup> On the British intelligence organizations during the Second World War and especially, the role played by the SOE, see: Bailey, *Forgotten voices of the secret war*; Foot, *SOE: An Outline History of the Special Operations Executive*; Jeffery, *MI6: The history of the Secret Intelligence Service*; Mackenzie, *The Secret History of SOE*; McLachlan, *Room 39: Naval Intelligence in action 1939-45*; Murphy, *Security and special operations*; Seaman, *Special Operations Executive*; West, *MI6: British Secret Intelligence*; and Wylie, *The Politics and Strategy of Clandestine War*. On the British intelligence in Spain, see: Grandío Seoane, *A*

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*Balancing Act*; Messenger, “Against the Grain: Special Operations”; Messenger, “Fighting for Relevance”; and Michael, “Operaciones Secretas Inglesas”; Viñas Martín, *Sobornos: de cómo Churchill y March*. On the influence of Foreign Office’s veto over Special Operations, see: Viñas Martín, *Sobornos*; West, *Secret war*, and Messenger, “Against the Grain”.

<sup>4</sup> *Operation Pilgrim, Adroit or Tonic*, among others. See: Díaz Benítez, “Pilgrim y La Defensa de Gran Canaria”; *Canarias Indefensa*; “Los Proyectos británicos para ocupar las Islas”; “Anglofilia y Autarquía; Díaz Benítez, “La Indefensión Naval de Canarias”; *La Armada Española*.

<sup>5</sup> Díaz Benítez, “Colaboración Naval Hispano-Alemana”; “German Supply Ships”; “The Etappe Kanaren”; “Submarinos en Canarias”; and, “El ataque contra el buque Corrientes”. The role played by *Corrientes* is also mentioned in: Brooks, *Secret Flotillas*; González Quevedo and Martínez Milán, *Submarinos y Buques de Las Potencias Del Eje*; Dinklage and Jürgen Withhöft, *Die Deutsche Handelsflotte: 1939-1945*; and Ros Agudo, *La Guerra Secreta de Franco*, 99–104.

<sup>6</sup> Díaz Benítez, “El ataque contra el buque Corrientes”, 1161; Messenger, “Against the Grain: Special Operations”, 177–78; Ros Agudo, *La Guerra Secreta de Franco*, 116; Viñas Martín, *Sobornos*, 343; and Wylie, *The Politics and Strategy of Clandestine War*, 115–16.

<sup>7</sup> Ros Agudo, *La Guerra Secreta de Franco*, 28-34.

<sup>8</sup> Morales, *Historia de la no beligerancia española*, 270-271.

<sup>9</sup> Goda, *Tomorrow the World*, 113-135; Tusell, “La trayectoria española”, 158-159; Ros Agudo, *La Gran Tentación*, 226-268.

<sup>10</sup> Díaz Benítez, “Colaboración Naval Hispano-Alemana”, 991.

<sup>11</sup> Payne and Contreras, *España y la Segunda Guerra Mundial*, 193.

<sup>12</sup> Messenger, “Against the Grain: Special Operations”, 174.

<sup>13</sup> Ros Agudo, *La Guerra Secreta de Franco*, 98.

<sup>14</sup> Díaz Benítez, *La Armada Española*, 82–83; Ros Agudo, *La Guerra Secreta de Franco*, 97.

<sup>15</sup> Ros Agudo, *La Guerra Secreta de Franco*, 72.

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- <sup>16</sup> On the description of the submarines supplied by German ships, see: Ros Agudo, *La Guerra Secreta de Franco*, 99–104; Díaz Benítez, “The Etappe Kanaren”, 482; and Wingate Pike, *Franco and the Axis Stigma*, 149.
- <sup>17</sup> Ros Agudo, *La Guerra Secreta de Franco*, 104.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 350; Burdick, “Moro: The Resupply of German Submarines”, 277; and Paterson, *Second U-Boat Flotilla*, 33.
- <sup>19</sup> Smyth, *Diplomacy*, 3; Payne and Contreras, *España y la Segunda Guerra Mundial*, 120.
- <sup>20</sup> Cited in Smyth, *Diplomacy*, 3.
- <sup>21</sup> On Spanish-British relations during the war, see: Fernández-Longoria, *La diplomacia británica y el primer franquismo*; and Moradiellos, *Franco frente a Churchill*. The bribery campaign is described in Viñas Martín, *Sobornos: de cómo Churchill y March*, 30-31
- <sup>22</sup> Jeffery, *MI6: The history*, 401-402; Messenger, “Against the Grain”, 175.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 579.
- <sup>24</sup> Grandío Seoane, *A Balancing Act*, 26; Hastings, *The Secret War*, 100; Viñas Martín, *Sobornos*, 45; 275).
- <sup>25</sup> Seaman, *Special Operations Executive*, 159-161.
- <sup>26</sup> Foot, *SOE in France*; Stafford, *Mission accomplished*; Seaman, *Special Operations Executive*, among others.
- <sup>27</sup> Some of the operations against enemy shipping in Norwegian ports were Operation *Chaffinch*, *Mardonius*, *Bundle* or *Goldfinch*, among others. See: Herrington, *Special Operations in Norway*; O'Connor, *Sabotage in Norway*; and Seaman, *Special Operations Executive*, 36-40.
- <sup>28</sup> Gilmour, *Sweden, the Swastika and Stalin*, 137–41.
- <sup>29</sup> Wylie, *Britain, Switzerland, and the Second World War*, 184.
- <sup>30</sup> Messenger, “Against the Grain”, 174.
- <sup>31</sup> Mackenzie, *The Secret History of SOE*, 241; Messenger, “Against the Grain: Special Operations”, 175.
- <sup>32</sup> Ros Agudo, *La Guerra Secreta de Franco*, 115–16.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

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- <sup>34</sup> Viñas Martín, *Sobornos*, 342; Seaman, *Special Operations Executive*, 165.
- <sup>35</sup> Michael, “Operaciones Secretas Inglesas”, 459; Messenger, “Against the Grain: Special Operations”, 175; Grandío Seoane, *A Balancing Act*, 26. The figure of Hillgarth and his position as Naval Attaché evidences the tendency towards coordination between intelligence agencies in Spain. See: Messenger, “Against the Grain: Special Operations”, 175-178; Smyth, “Screening Torch,” 342. The liaison between the SOE and the NID in Spain was also present in other operations such as *Goldeneye*, in which agent Ian Fleming acted as an intermediary under the position of Assistant Director of Naval Intelligence (ADNI) and Liaison Commander between the NID and SOE’s Operations and Training Section. See: Lett, *Ian Fleming and SOE’s Operation Postmaster*, 36-38; Lycett, *Ian Fleming*, 2012, 99–103.
- <sup>36</sup> Some of the SOE operations in Spain were *Operation Reproach*, *Operation Relator*, *Operation Goldeneye*, among others. See: Messenger, “Against the Grain: Special Operations”, 176-179; Day, *Franco’s friends*, 194–95; Viñas Martín, *Sobornos*, 341-342, Wylie, *The Politics and Strategy*, 182; Day, *Franco’s Friends*, 188; Lett, *Ian Fleming and SOE’s Operation Postmaster*, 36–66; and Simmons, *Ian Fleming and Operation Golden Eye*.
- <sup>37</sup> TNA, ADM 223/480, Clandestine Warfare Report, 8 June 1945; Ramírez Copeiro del Villar, *Objetivo Africa*, 313-321.
- <sup>38</sup> Ramírez Copeiro del Villar, *Objetivo Africa*, 313-321.
- <sup>39</sup> Messenger, “Against the Grain”, 180-181.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid., 400; Messenger, “Against the Grain”, 177.
- <sup>41</sup> Díaz Benítez, “Los Proyectos Británicos”, 2-20.
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid., 1-20.
- <sup>43</sup> Ros Agudo, *La Guerra Secreta de Franco*, 99–104; Díaz Benítez, “Colaboración Naval Hispano-Alemana”, 993.
- <sup>44</sup> Díaz Benítez, “The Etappe Kanaren”, 477-482.
- <sup>45</sup> Díaz Benítez, “Colaboración Naval Hispano-Alemana”, 989.

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<sup>46</sup> The German supply vessels for auxiliary cruisers were the *Winnetou*, *Rekum*, *Rudolf Albrecht*, *Eurofeld* and *Charlotte Schliemann*. The main supply vessels for submarines were the *Corrientes* and *Kersten Miles*.

Díaz-Benítez, “German Supply Ships”, 327.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Díaz Benítez, “Náufragos en Canarias”, 37.

<sup>49</sup> Blair, *Hitler’s U-Boat War*, 209–22; Díaz Benítez, “Colaboración Naval Hispano-Alemana”, 992.

<sup>50</sup> Díaz Benítez, “Colaboración Naval Hispano-Alemana”, 994.

<sup>51</sup> Ros Agudo, *La Guerra Secreta de Franco*, 102; Díaz Benítez, “Colaboración Naval Hispano-Alemana”, 992.

<sup>52</sup> TNA, ADM 223/480, Culebra- Appendix, n.d. Véase también: Dinklage and Witthöft, *Die Deutsche Handelsflotte*, 99; Díaz Benítez, “El Ataque Contra El Buque Corrientes”, 1162.

<sup>53</sup> TNA, ADM 223/480, Culebra, n.d.; and Díaz-Benítez, “German Supply Ships and Blockade”, 320.

<sup>54</sup> Díaz Benítez, “El Ataque Contra El Buque Corrientes”, 1162.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 1163.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 1165-1166.

<sup>57</sup> Macrae, *Winston Churchill’s Toyshop*, 13–17.

<sup>58</sup> Díaz Benítez, “El Ataque Contra El Buque Corrientes”, 1166.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 1166; and Alexiades, *Target Corinth Canal 1940-1944*, Appendix H.

<sup>60</sup> Burdick, “Moro’: The Resupply of German Submarines”, 283; Ros Agudo, *La Guerra Secreta de Franco*, 104; Díaz Benítez, “Colaboración Naval Hispano-Alemana”, 992; Díaz Benítez, “The Etappe Kanaren”, 479.

<sup>61</sup> Díaz Benítez, “Colaboración Naval Hispano-Alemana”, 992.

<sup>62</sup> TNA, ADM 223/480, Culebra, n.d.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

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- <sup>65</sup> García Cabrera and Díaz Benítez, “Organización y contenidos de la propaganda”, 523-524.
- <sup>66</sup> TNA, FO 371/26929, Message from British Consul at Las Palmas, 30 May, 12 July and 15 July 1941.
- <sup>67</sup> TNA, FO 371/26929, From Admiralty to FO, 30 July 1941.
- <sup>68</sup> Miller, *Canary Saga: Miller Family*, Book cover. The personal bulletins written by William Miller emphasize the work provided by Gerald and Basil in the control of the German activities in Puerto de la Luz. See: Bulletins *Forward*, *Miller History News*, issues 31, 39, and 41, among others. According to indications sent by the Head of SOE Mission in Lisbon, Miller had arrived in Lisbon to take a boat to Great Britain a few days later. However, J. G. Beevor asked Alan Hillgarth about the possibility of training Basil Miller and returning him to the consulate of Las Palmas with a fake medical certificate that disqualified him from joining the naval forces. Nonetheless, his own memoirs and the documentation consulted by the family indicate how Basil finally arrived in England on a merchant ship. See: TNA, HS 6/912, Notes on Canaries, 29 May 1941; TNA, HS 6/912, Report from H.A. to H., 28 May 1941.
- <sup>69</sup> TNA, HS 6/912, Notes on Canaries, 29 May 1941.
- <sup>70</sup> TNA, AIR 20/3971, Informe «Canary Islands», julio de 1941, cited in Díaz Benítez, *Anglofilia y Autarquía*, 444–45.
- <sup>71</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>72</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>73</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>74</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>75</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>76</sup> Ibid. The *Schliemann* was an oil tanker that had arrived in Las Palmas on 19 September 1939 from Germany. It had already been refuelling other ships such as the oil tanker *Winnetou* since January 1940, and the *Gedania* in October. During the nights of 29 May and 12 July 1941, the *Schliemann* sent fuel using a barge to the cargo ship *Corrientes*, while the latter was anchored in the outermost section of the port. Additionally, on 9 July, the *Schliemann* supplied fuel to the *Kersten Miles* – a cargo ship docked in Las Palmas since 22 April 1941. This situation

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contributed to some informants paying attention to the *Schliemann's* loss of oil and height, and to considering it as a possible protagonist of operations. See: TNA, FO 371/26929, Message from British Consul at Las Palmas, 30 May, 12 July and 15 July 1941.

<sup>77</sup> TNA, FO 371/26929, From Admiralty to FO, 30 July 1941.

<sup>78</sup> TNA, HS 6/931, Warden Project, 15 July 1941.

<sup>79</sup> Messenger, "Against the Grain: Special Operations", 177.

<sup>80</sup> Ros Agudo, *La Guerra Secreta de Franco*, 116.

<sup>81</sup> Stirling et al, *Intelligence co-operation between Poland and Great Britain*, 151-154.

<sup>82</sup> The German ships mentioned were the *SS Corrientes*, the *TS Charlotte Schliemann* and the *MV Kersten Miles*. The Italian vessels were the *SS Orata*, the *SS Chercha* and the *SS Trovatore*; and the Danish vessel was the *SS Linda*. TNA, HS 6/931, Warden Project, 15 July 1941.

<sup>83</sup> TNA, ADM 223/480, Warden, n.d.

<sup>84</sup> TNA, HS 6/931, Warden Project, 5 August 1941.

<sup>85</sup> TNA, ADM 223/480, Information supplied by MR. T. Basil Miller, 10 July 1941.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* The beach was at the bottom of a large drop, which meant that the authorities did not have a direct view of the people who entered and left the buildings.

<sup>87</sup> TNA, ADM 223/480, Information supplied by MR. T. Basil Miller, 10 July 1941.

<sup>88</sup> TNA, HS 6/931, Warden Project, 15 July 1941.

<sup>89</sup> TNA, HS 6/931, Notes on meeting held on the 24th July to discuss the general outline of this operation, 25 July 1941.

<sup>90</sup> TNA, ADM 223/480, Warden, 27 August 1941.

<sup>91</sup> TNA, ADM 223/480, Notes extra, 15 July 1941.

<sup>92</sup> TNA, HS 6/931, Warden. Report on visit to S.T.S. 21 and 24, 19 July 1941.

<sup>93</sup> TNA, HS 6/931, Warden Project, 15 July 1941.

<sup>94</sup> TNA, ADM 223/480, Notes extra, 15 July 1941.

<sup>95</sup> *Special Operations Executive (TNA Secret History Files), How to Be a Spy*, 3.

<sup>96</sup> TNA, HS 6/931, Warden. Report on visit to S.T.S. 21 and 24, 19 July 1941.



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- <sup>97</sup> Ibid.; HS 6/931, Warden Project, 5 August 1941; Diagram of the system in TNA, HS 6/931, n.d.
- <sup>98</sup> TNA, HS 6/931, Warden. Report on visit to S.T.S. 21 and 24, 19 July 1941.
- <sup>99</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>100</sup> Ibid.; and TNA, HS 6/931, Warden Project, 5 August 1941.
- <sup>101</sup> The meeting was attended by Charles Hambro (AD/A), the figure of liaison with the Royal Navy (D/ Navy), the Shipping Section (D/ Z), the Operations Section (MO), the Staff Officer of the Czech-Polish Section (MX) and the MPO section. See: TNA, HS 6/931, Notes on meeting held on the 24th July, 25 July 1941.
- <sup>102</sup> TNA, HS 6/931, Warden. Report on visit to S.T.S. 21 and 24, 19 July 1941.
- <sup>103</sup> TNA, HS 6/931, From DS/R (Director of Scientific Research Section) to D/X (Research and Development of equipment Section), 1 August 1941.
- <sup>104</sup> TNA, ADM 223/480, Warden, n.d.
- <sup>105</sup> TNA, HS 6/931, Warden. Report on visit to S.T.S. 21 and 24, 19 July 1941.
- <sup>106</sup> Díaz Benítez, “Pilgrim y La Defensa de Gran Canaria,” 350-354.
- <sup>107</sup> TNA, ADM 223/480, Minute Sheet and notes, from 29 to 31 August 1941.
- <sup>108</sup> Viñas Martín, *Sobornos*, 343; West, *Secret war*, 60; 100, and Messenger, “Against the Grain”, 175.
- <sup>109</sup> Viñas Martín, *Sobornos*, 276-277.
- <sup>110</sup> Messenger, “Against the Grain”, 176.
- <sup>111</sup> Ros Agudo, *La Guerra Secreta de Franco*, 100–102.
- <sup>112</sup> TNA, ADM 223/480, Operation Warden, notes from Gladwyn Jebb, 2 September 1941.
- <sup>113</sup> TNA, ADM 223/480, Telegrama de Samuel Hoare, 25 August 1941.
- <sup>114</sup> United States, Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. XIII The War years, 168-169, memorandum 18 July 1941, cited in Díaz Benítez, *La Armada Española*, 103–4.
- <sup>115</sup> TNA, ADM 223/480, Operation Warden, notes from Gladwyn Jebb, 2 September 1941.
- <sup>116</sup> TNA, ADM 223/480, from Roger Makins to Charles Hambro, 2 September 1941.

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- <sup>117</sup> TNA, ADM 223/480, From Admiral Holdbrook NID17 to DNI, 1 September 1941.
- <sup>118</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>119</sup> Richards, *Secret Flotillas*, 91.; 135-136.
- <sup>120</sup> Ibid.; TNA, ADM 223/480, Operation Warden, notes from Gladwyn Jebb, 2 September 1941; Ramírez Copeiro del Villar, *Objetivo Africa*, 313-321.
- <sup>121</sup> TNA, ADM 223/480, From Admiral Holdbrook NID17 to DNI, 1 September 1941.
- <sup>122</sup> TNA, ADM 223/480, Handwritten note, 3 September 1941.
- <sup>123</sup> Harrison, David (15 June 2005). "Empire Simba". WW2 People's War: An archive of World War Two memories. BBC. Retrieved 10 February 2019; Port Arrivals/Departures, Arnold Hague's Ports Database. Convoy Web. Retrieved 10 February 2019).
- <sup>124</sup> TNA, ADM 223/480, Operation Warden, notes from Gladwyn Jebb, 2 September 1941, also cited in Ros Agudo, *La Guerra Secreta de Franco*, 108.
- <sup>125</sup> TNA, FO 371/26929, Note from British Embassy to Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 4 September 1941.
- <sup>126</sup> TNA, FO 371/26929, Note from Consulate at Las Palmas, 17 September 1941; Ros Agudo, *La Guerra Secreta de Franco*, 107–9; Díaz Benítez, "The Etappe Kanaren", 483; TNA, FO 371/26929, Note from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 24 September 1941.
- <sup>127</sup> United States, Department of State, *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, Series D, Vol. XIII The War years, 628-629; 647-648, cited in Díaz Benítez, *La Armada Española*, 105.
- <sup>128</sup> Díaz Benítez, "Náufragos en Canarias", 43.
- <sup>129</sup> Ros Agudo, *La Guerra Secreta de Franco*, 116.
- <sup>130</sup> TNA, ADM 223/490, Memorandum by Hillgarth to NID, 18 February 1943.
- <sup>131</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>132</sup> TNA, ADM 223/490, Memorandum by Hillgarth to NID, 18 February 1943, cited in Ros Agudo, *La Guerra Secreta de Franco*, 116.
- <sup>133</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>134</sup> Ros Agudo, *La Guerra Secreta de Franco*, 116.

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- <sup>135</sup> TNA, ADM 223/490, Memorandum by Hillgarth to NID, 18 February 1943, cited in Ros Agudo, *La Guerra Secreta de Franco*, 116.
- <sup>136</sup> TNA, ADM 223/490, Rushbrooke to Hillgarth, 31 March 1943.
- <sup>137</sup> Messenger, *The Commandos*, 53.
- <sup>138</sup> Lett, *The Small Scale Raiding Force*, 13–14.
- <sup>139</sup> Díaz Benítez, “Los Proyectos Británicos”, 19.
- <sup>140</sup> TNA, HS 6/931, Warden. Report on visit to S.T.S. 21 and 24, 19 July 1941.

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